

Locus Naked

Marga Clark

Valentí Gómez i Oliver

(english version)

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Marga Clark
(original texts in spanish)

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(original texts in catalan)

Dialogue:

New York: Marga Clark
Rome: Valentí Gómez i Oliver

*Numberless crowded streets, high growths of iron, slender, strong, light,
splendidly uprising toward clear skies.*

Walt Whitman

ALONE

I don't know why everyone sees you as a man when, really, I see you more as a woman. No, it's not that you smell like a woman. Your smell is rather more restrained (except for those tempting ethnic smells the food carts in your streets give off). I hate that sickly-sweet wave of perfume left by some women in the elevator, or still when they brush beside you walking by. Your aromas are neither cheap nor particularly exuberant and, what's more, they don't make themselves obvious. Your, is the smell of a direct woman, a little ambiguous and full of secrets. I'm also a woman, and the only reason why, after having maintained such an intense relationship with you for so many years, I have never fallen in love with you is, I believe, precisely because of your way of being so obscurely feminine. I often considered the possibility of falling in love with you, and so discover yours most intimate secrets, but then you, realizing my audacity, would show me your unruly side, rebellious and a little capricious, and snub me. Yes, I've missed you many times. If you only knew how often I've thought about you! Deep down, this is just what has always attracted me most about your character: your large sense of independence, your thirst for liberty, never to be possessed by another. By day, you dress up in your iron breastplate and parade (like a bold warrior, proud and haughty) around those tough and violent neighborhoods, crammed with aggressively erect buildings. At night, you dress up as a woman and show off your swinging figure, laughing away till dawn. These are your weapons of defense, but you no longer fool me, and I know that through this glamorous veneer, loud and glittering, there hides a tremendously lonely and sad soul. But of course, this is one of your multiple secrets. I never became your lover, as you well know, but rather a kind of little sister who regards you with interest and curiosity, never knowing where you'll spring from. You entertain me, teach me, and always surprise me. And this is what makes me love you even more.

M.C.

UNDERTONES

“I am quite aware that there are few of us cities with such an ancient origin, so meticulous a genesis, and with such a fertile mythological system. And a significant secret in the name itself – Rome, in my case- that very few know and which, even today, many strive to discover. I should be happy, in spite of it all, though, I feel a great melancholy.

I remember with delight when one of the twins founded that which I would become, on the edge of a placid and mighty river flowing into a clear and courageous sea, communicating also with the waters of the Ocean. We would meet, even then, usually with those other cities sacred to the Gods, and we would amuse ourselves with it all quite well. Even, after voyaging along Orphic subterranean invisible paths, messengers from such far-away lands as China, India, Mesopotamia, the Arctic Circle, and the peoples as diverse as the Mayans, Egyptians, Zulus, Greeks, or Tartessians, would join us. Together we would talk for hours upon hours, entire weeks perhaps, about- among other things- our respective ritual ceremonies. We would comment on them and, at times, some brave souls would mentally “represent” them. We all enjoyed it very much (good and wise, some messengers- this was quite amusing- gave themselves such garish airs, like some all-powerful vanquisher, when each of us knew that the oxymoron of the sexes, from the divine point of view, escorted the Centre of Origin into sight of the hermaphrodite form). As I’ve said, we amused ourselves very much with all those conversations and dialogues. And we understood each other, there were never any problems, neither in Sanscrit nor Chinese, neither in Greek, Mayan, Latin nor in whichever tongue was needed. I recall now the time when I was to comment on one of “my” scholar’s pieces: *terra omnium terrarium alumna eadem et parens, numine deum electa quæ cælum ipsum clarius facerat...*”¹

V.G.i O.

¹ Pliny, *Naturalis historia*, III,39

DIALOGUE: NEW YORK- ROME

NY: This is a special moment for me, sitting here together, face to face.

And just think, after insisting so much on seeing you, now I feel nervous and don't know where to begin.

R: You know perfectly well that without knowing each other we are almost like old friends, we've got some rather similar stories. Even if in terms of years they're quite different, it's quite possible that in terms of quality they're a lot more similar than people think. This meeting was inevitable.

NY: Yes, but deep down I can't help thinking you've always rejected me in a way, or am I wrong? Or at least those envoys I've sent you so often have always come back with their tails between their legs and a definite no" in answer to my insistence on meeting with you.

R: Remember that Mercury, the Hermes of the Greeks, was the messenger of the Gods, and messengers always find themselves in awkward situations. I think you and I get straight to the point, without intermediaries.

NY: Maybe you're right. You know, you've surprised me a little.

R: Have I? Now this is getting interesting.

NY: Yes, your physical appearance is not exactly what I expected.

R: Go on, go on.

NY: You're a rather unexpected type, you're not as old as I'd imagined, you've got this extraordinary brilliance in your eyes. I've often met older people who, like yourself, keep their youth sealed in their eyes. Despite your graying temples you move your body with style, you don't carry a cane, your elegance brings you into light, you have good taste and, more than anything else, you're extremely cultivated- though you could do with a little more imagination.

R: Don't forget that our entire culture owes a great deal to the Greek world. There's a word for it, it's precisely this union of opposites which is an oxymoron. I've also noticed a certain maturity in you, even though you're regarded as being so young, especially in some of your forms and certain building styles. Perhaps, wanting to simulate the old, the tradition,

is something that obviously concerns. You've always debated between the old and the new.

NY: And how can that be avoided? I've always welcomed, with open arms, your artists and intellectuals who have turned to my island for refuge or to make their way in the world. An exchange has been established between the old, mature and wise on the one hand, and the fresh, young and innovative on the other. We have gathered wisdom and memory of the past and you have renewed and rejuvenated your ideas. It has always been a good symbiosis.

R: In other words, we're a little attracted to each other. What would Jupiter and Minerva have to say about this?

NY: And what would Sitting Bull have to say? Let's get back to the present. What I'd like to know is how you manage to put up with living shut up in your necropolises and museums, constantly surrounded by hoards of tourists, with all those "motorinos" and cars crossing your streets – many without sidewalks- making that unbearable racket, frightening your pedestrians and giving off lethal fumes. Just thinking about it makes you gasp.

R: Well, perhaps when I think about it, I do feel a little overwhelmed locked up in my necropolises, but don't forget the saying – "See Rome and Die". For millenniums I have been the base of an empire of which the whole world wanted to be a citizen, the spiritual centre of a religion to whom the faithful turn in pilgrimage, and I have in my possession a coffer of monuments and artistic marvels which incite all lovers of beauty to visit me. I offer ecstasy in exchange for that deafening chaos which does occasionally culminate in silence.

NY: And I offer concern, vitality, originality and also a very personal sense of freedom which is difficult to explain. Only those who know me very well can really understand this. Here, individuals express themselves because they feel a great need to do so. Other understand this and respect it, and leave them alone.

R: But isn't it just this that creates a great cooling of human relations?

NY: Yes, it's true! True for those who don't know how to respect. This Anglo-Saxon aloofness, which is sometimes necessary for respect, is basic for maintaining good relations. It's simply a mark of consideration towards others. We mustn't confuse love with respect. There is often

much love without respect, but where there is respect, it's almost always a sign of love.

R: And what about you? Do you love me or respect me?

NY: Well! More than respect, you arouse in me a certain fear. I always feel a little out of place with you. With regards to love...

R: There is an interesting paradox between the material and the spiritual in our two worlds. You, prosperous in wealth and weak in spirit, and I, spiritually fervent but lacking in material progress. What could we do to shorten such distance?

NY: The ideal would be Utopia, as usual, to find a balance between reason and sentiment.

R: Building, as my old pontifices did, a bridge of tolerance.

NY: Ah, tolerance! That magic word which would open all doors to us. By the way, speaking of magic, do you know where you and I are sitting just now?

R: I've already realized, but to tell the truth, I never guessed it would be so comfortable.

NY: I wanted to surprise you. William Gibson and I are friends, and you know he was the first to use the term "cyberspace", so he gave me a hand.

R: With all the beautiful places my city has!

NY: Yes, I agree, but do you realize that cyberspace will end up taking over real space?

R: Yes, but even so, I still miss my marvelous sunsets. I don't owe my reputation to them for nothing.

NY: I can see that this topic is irritating you. I want to propose something. You connect with one of my sunsets sitting on Brooklyn Bridge, and I connect with one of yours, strolling around the Roman Forum.

R: I think that's an excellent idea. See you soon, then! *Cura ut valeas!*

NY: Till next time. Take care!

red skins white smoke black voices yellow faces blue eyes
sweetened obesities wicked smells bloody pizzas golden corn
watery coffee tired sexuality heartless insanity eclipsed virgin
sacred television manufactured ecstasy merciless killers orga-
nised homeless aware students cracked-out Harlem uniformed
Park Avenue circumcised Wall Street devilish capital arrogant
Buildings enslaved Brooklyn thoughtful bridges bubbling Cen-
tral Park delirious minorities hallucinating spaces hair-raising
chewing gum agonizing spirit exciting rhythms whistling si-
rens thundering trucks suffocating subways militant house-
wives floating bag-ladies unbounded ethnics titilating Broadway
boom boxes fenced-off trees forbidden gardens caged apart-
ments freezing winters abused children deified dogs isolated
aged burnt buildings persistent teenagers sanctified ketchup
politicized alcohol dosed cigars disguised cigarette premature-
ly-aged marijuana refined heroin consecrated hamburger balan-
ced diets bulk vitamins ubiquitous exercise bicycles and skates
guns and jasmine

Manhattan: Olympus and Hades

M.C.

The Dance of Rome

*Inspired by the trinity,
the one God, the two Goddesses,
the spirit duly languishes,
beholding Eternal City.*

Bell towers throughout the springtide,
procure an ochrous state of peace,
more truthful and more dignified,
though the rushes are yet to cease.
Paternal law's authority,
the Roman oven manifest,
and polished down towards the West,
beholding Eternal City.

Deserted ruins yet living,
twinkle their eyes at one and all,
cumulation ever giving,
sentries holding themselves still tall.
Great maternal sagacity,
plunges down to the river bed,
in summer at once to ascend,
beholding Eternal City.

Then you gather all unawares,
for now with immigrants you swell,
from countries, circuses and fairs,
where saints are not suffered to dwell.
Growing murmurs of fraternity,
in the innocent cub's defence,
and the Demon, in fear, laments,
beholding Eternal City.

Like the lantern's lucidity,
my body's soul – yours, theirs aswell,
you'll never really bid farewell,
beholding Eternal City.